

National Service Impact in Nebraska



State Commission

The Nebraska Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism oversees almost \$1.5 million in grants distributed to service programs and activities throughout Nebraska. The Commission approved funding for 14 competitive and formula program grants in the 2015-2016 year. These grants fund more than 250 AmeriCorps members at various locations across Nebraska. The Commission partnered with Youth Service America and State Farm, awarding mini-grants to support youth leadership in community service events. ServeNebraska in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service to commemorate Days of Service events such as MLK Day of Service, Veterans Day, and Mayor, County, and Tribal Recognition Day for National Service.

AmeriCorps State

The AmeriCorps Nebraska Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) Program focuses on providing education and early employment supportive services for at-risk youth across Nebraska. The RISE members provide skilled support to adjudicated youth in all 12 Nebraska judicial districts and collaborate with community volunteers and stakeholders to help create a brighter future for Nebraska youth. RISE AmeriCorps members serve alongside probation officers assisting probationers in 32 counties across the state.

University of Nebraska's Autism Care for Toddlers program continues to grow as a result of the contributions of AmeriCorps members. The services provided at this clinic are unique to the state and wouldn't be available if it weren't for the AmeriCorps members. Services are provided to preschool aged children who do not have access to insurance coverage for autism care. Children receive nine hours of direct service each week along with their families.

AmeriCorps National

College Possible Omaha, which serves 2,400 high school and college students, is closing Nebraska's degree divide and building a competitive workforce for the future. By 2020, 71 percent of jobs in the state will require a post-secondary education, but only 8 percent of low-income students nationally earn a college degree by age 24. College Possible Omaha's AmeriCorps coaches guide low-income students through all aspects of preparing for, applying to, and enrolling in college and support students all the way through college graduation. Students who are guided by College Possible AmeriCorps members have a 98 percent college admission rate and are 10 times more likely to graduate from college than their low-income peers. A 2013 Harvard randomized controlled trial found that students in College Possible's AmeriCorps-based program model had a significant positive increase in four-year college enrollment. By harnessing the power of national service, College Possible creates better futures for all Nebraskans.

One Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Corps AmeriCorps member served this past year at Central Nebraska Area Health Education Center in Grand Island. YMHFA is a certification course that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of adolescent mental health problems, focuses on the importance of early intervention, and teaches how to help adolescents who are in crisis or having a mental health or substance use challenge. The AmeriCorps member, who is a trained YMHFA instructor, certified 54 community members in the program. A three month follow up survey revealed that YMHFA strategies helped 42 individuals who struggle with a mental health challenge or illness.

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA members serving with the South Sioux City are improving the city's capacity to serve its residents and provide opportunities for those in need to overcome economic barriers. AmeriCorps VISTA members developed partnerships and collaborated with business and industry leaders that resulted in a new 40 million dollar industry, Big Ox Siouxland, coming to town, which will result in significant capital investment, higher wages, and opportunities to improve South Sioux City's economic conditions. VISTA members also secured \$7,700 in funding to offer 21 classes in small business training for low to moderate income individuals. To improve the quality of housing in the community, a VISTA member created a rental inspection and improvement program for the City and applied for a \$465,000 grant for owner-occupied rental rehabilitation. During the 2015 program year, VISTA service resulted in a total of \$79,882 dollars leveraged, 33 individuals receiving job training or other skill development services, which resulted in 12 individuals getting hired.

Lutheran Family Services at Ease provides trauma treatment and therapeutic support programs for active military, veterans, and their loved ones. Their AmeriCorps VISTA member conducted a needs assessment specific to the diverse military populations throughout Nebraska so that they could more effectively serve their clients and developed partnerships to increase resources, eliminate barriers to service development, and raise awareness in rural communities. The VISTA member helped bring the Theater of War to Nebraska, which is a project that presents readings as a catalyst for town hall discussions about the challenges faced by service members, veterans, their families, caregivers and communities. In 2015, Lutheran Family Services at Ease served 624 veterans and military family members and leveraged \$6,050 in cash resources.

AmeriCorps NCCC

Lauritzen Gardens, the leading conservation organization in Omaha, is a living museum of unique four-season plant displays. The mission of this organization is carried out through the medium of beautiful and engaging gardens, displays, plantings, and natural plant communities, which also provides memorable educational and aesthetic experiences for visitors. An AmeriCorps NCCC team was requested to support ongoing rehabilitation and recovery of landscape plantings and natural areas impacted by construction in the area. The team also assisted with reestablishing prairie in the Song of the Lark Meadow which was destroyed by the construction project. Members cleared brush and mulched three-quarters of a mile of walking trail in the Wooded Walk. They also helped relocate and plant chrysanthemums, tulip bulbs, and cleared half-acre of sunflower forest. The team mowed, pruned, and mulched three sections of retaining walls and planted native trees throughout the botanical gardens.

Pawnee City Historical Museum in Pawnee contributes to the vitality of the community and to the pioneer and local history education of people of all ages. It continues to grow and engage more local residents, as well as visitors and students, but the growth has also proven to be a challenge. In the spring and summer of 2015, an AmeriCorps NCCC team was requested to support the museum's efforts to bring its buildings and facilities back to fully tour-ready shape by painting buildings, cleaning and moving displays, cleaning books, painting the inside of the library, and repairing buildings. Maintaining and restoring the crucial antiques and artifacts that represent American history during the pioneering days is vital to attracting tourists and, by extension, helping to revitalize Pawnee's economy.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska's 88 Foster Grandparents serve Banner, Cheyenne, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Keith, Lincoln, Morrill and Scottsbluff counties. They provided one-on-one support to 684 students, including weekly assistance and mentoring, during the past school year. Foster Grandparents individually engaged students in developmentally appropriate activities for social, behavioral and cognitive skills. Eighty-two percent of students demonstrated gains in social and/or emotional development; and 70 percent of students in mentoring and tutoring programs showed improved academics as a result of the 109,521 hours served. The program also adopted a Summer Lifetime Wellness distance learning program for volunteers to track their nutrition and exercise to keep healthy.

Senior Corps RSVP

Box Butte County RSVP, sponsored by the City of Alliance, has provided high quality volunteer opportunities to meet critical community needs for 40 years. In 2015, in partnership with Alliance Public Schools, the program launched a new Reading Coach program at Emerson and Grandview Elementary Schools. The volunteers meet with struggling students once a week for 15 minutes to help them with their reading. Twenty six students received one-on-one reading mentoring in the first three months of the program. During the past year, 342 volunteers helped individuals receive independent living services through home delivered meals, transportation and companionship which has resulted in 60percent of individuals having increased social support. Volunteers in the program are also addressing obesity by providing health education coaching to 538 individuals. In a very rural part of Nebraska where funding for programs is limited, RSVP volunteers are answering the call and have generated \$41,772 dollars of in-kind contributions for the community.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging's 73 Senior Companions serve Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy and Washington counties. During 2015, they provided companionship or non-medical in-home care services to 238 clients. Senior Companions assisted with activities including transportation to medical appointments, home safety checks, referring clients to needed community resources, activities of daily living, recreational activities, encouraging therapy and redirecting potentially stressful situations. Ninety-three percent of the clients served reported increased social ties and perceived social support and were able to remain independently living in their own home as a result of the 67,297 hours served. In an effort to have the most qualified Senior Companions serving clients, the program has partnered with Creighton University to provide fall prevention training and to conduct a balance clinic.